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SUBJECT: NANJING MASSACRE MEMORIAL HALL DIRECTOR SEEKS CHANNEL TO
U.S. INSTITUTIONS

REF: A) 07 SHANGHAI 804; B) SHANGHAI 258

11. (SBU) Summary: Non-Chinese, including some Japanese, accounted for about 10 percent of the 5.4 million visitors in 2008 to Nanjing's memorial hall commemorating the Chinese victims of the city's occupation by Japanese forces in 1937. Zhu Chengshan, the director of the memorial, which contains surprisingly few references to the role of the Communist Party in the war against Japan, is interested in gaining greater international recognition of the memorial hall and would like contacts with similar institutions in the United States, notably Washington's Holocaust Museum. Zhu also praised a recent Chinese film about the occupation of Nanjing for its complex emotional portrayal of both Chinese and Japanese characters. End summary.

Visitors Number over Five Million per Year

12. (SBU) The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall (in full "The Memorial Hall for Victims of the Massacre in Nanjing by Japanese Military Forces Invading China") received over 5.4 million visitors in 2008, according to the Memorial Hall's Director Zhu Chengshan. Meeting with Consulate General Shanghai's Deputy Principal Officer June 18, Zhu said over 80 percent of visitors were tourists. About 10 percent (500,000) were from foreign countries, the largest numbers coming from Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore. Visitors from Taiwan were also numerous, Zhu indicated, but did not provide any figures. (Ref A describes a visit to this museum when China marked the seventieth anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre.)

Two Aims: Remembering History, Promoting Peace

13. (SBU) The goal of the Memorial Hall, Zhu stressed, is twofold. The first aim is remembrance: to educate visitors about the history of the Japanese invasion of China as exemplified by events in Nanjing. The second goal is to promote peace. (Note: Although most of the substantive displays present the details of the Japanese investiture of Nanjing, peace memorials and meditation areas form large portions of the

Memorial Hall complex. End note.) Zhu, who has visited the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, explained the Hall incorporates a number of display techniques borrowed from the Holocaust Museum, such as the integration of video displays, as well as other similar memorials such as from Israel's Yad Vashem shrine.

Contact with U.S. Institutions Welcome

¶4. (SBU) According to Zhu, the Memorial Hall receives a number of Japanese visitors, including former soldiers. (Note: All exhibits have signs in Chinese, English, and Japanese. In addition, one of the peace monuments is festooned with strings of paper cranes apparently donated by schools or other institutions in Japan. End note.) The "Nanjing International Peace Research Institute," headed by Zhu, also has ties to Japanese institutions, notably the Kyoto International Peace Museum at Ritsumeikan University.

¶5. (SBU) Thus far, the Memorial Hall has had no formal contact with either Washington's Holocaust Museum or with the USS Arizona Memorial in Hawaii, according to Zhu. Nevertheless, Zhu was strongly interested in establishing relationships with those two particular U.S. institutions, as both have missions complementary to that of the Memorial Hall. The main problem, he noted, was that the Memorial Hall lacks a channel to communicate with those U.S. institutions. The Memorial Hall does have international links; in addition to the Japanese institutions noted above, it has been in contact with similar memorials in Poland (Auschwitz), Russia, and South Korea. Zhu said the Memorial Hall would welcome temporary exhibitions from other museums, and in fact was currently hosting an exhibition

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on resistance to the Japanese occupation of the Philippines.

Recent Nanjing Films: "Nanjing! Nanjing!" Works, "Rabe" Does Not

¶6. (SBU) Asked about two recent films on the Japanese occupation of Nanjing -- the Chinese film "Nanjing! Nanjing!" (English title "City of Life and Death") (ref B) and the German production "John Rabe" -- Zhu, who served on the review committee of the Chinese film, felt it had been the more successful work. Both films contain historical and cultural inaccuracies, but the characters in "City of Life and Death" are more substantial than in the German film and challenged the traditional portrayal of Chinese purely as heroes and Japanese purely as villains. Zhu acknowledged many Chinese had trouble accepting the sympathetic rendering in "City of Life and Death" of a young Japanese officer who frees two Chinese prisoners and then commits suicide rather than continue to participate in the brutality of the occupation. "John Rabe" not only presented the Chinese characters as much too passive but also understates the role Americans played in establishing the International Security Zone to protect refugees while overemphasizing the contribution of Rabe and other Germans.

Where's the Party?

¶7. (SBU) Comment: Zhu impressed us as a thoughtful and serious scholar, and we were struck as much by what was not on display in the Memorial Hall as by what was. Notably, the Memorial Hall has almost nothing on the role of the Communist Party in the struggle against Japan. Only one small display, featuring a single photo of Mao Zedong with the American author Edgar Snow in Yan'an, notes the Party's contribution in the war against Japan. (The importance of the United States in defeating Japan is also largely ignored, but Nationalist armies and officials are prominently featured.) While the primary theme of the Memorial centers on China as a victim of Japanese aggression, we saw no content aimed at stirring up a desire for retribution or at demonizing contemporary Japan. Zhu's obvious eagerness to establish contacts with similar memorial institutions in the

United States indicates a desire for recognition of the Memorial Hall as a sincere effort to document a historical tragedy rather than as simply a piece of nationalist propaganda. End comment.
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